

MENTORING PROGRAM FOR ARTISTS OF COLOR & TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Artists of Color

The Mentoring Program for Artists of Color provides funding to pair established master artists or administrators of any ethnic background with artist or administrators of color who want to work one-on-one with someone to enhance their skills.

Possible mentoring projects include:

- An emerging singing group interested in performing traditional gospel music could work with an established gospel music director to polish its techniques. The music director could provide musical training that may not otherwise be available to a newer group.
- An established tour manager could show the leader of a performing group how to manage a tour and how to develop marketing materials so the group could start touring on its own.
- The curator of a neighborhood gallery could work with his/her counterpart from a major art museum to learn how to properly install an exhibit, how to keep inventory records, how to build crates for shows, and other activities associated with mounting exhibitions,
- An artist who wants to enter his/her work in competitions could work with a photographer to learn how to take slides of the work.

Traditional Artists

The Mentoring Program for Traditional Artists provides funding for traditional artists who wish to learn more about their art form by working with another, more experienced traditional artist.

The mentoring program is a learning situation where a master artist teaches skills to an apprentice. The master artist (or mentor) is someone who is recognized within her or her community as one of the very best artists in the field. Usually, the apprentice is someone who has already begun working in this art form, or in a related one, and wants to further develop his or her skills. The mentoring situation is not a class, but a chance for a highly skilled artist to pass on his or her knowledge to another. Usually the mentor has only one apprentice at a time. They work together, one-on-one, so that the apprentice can learn as much as possible. The mentor and the apprentice may meet together every day, every week, or as scheduled.

Eligible Art Forms

Any kind of traditional art that takes place within a community, family, tribe or small group can qualify. Crafts like saddlemaking, leather braiding, Winnebago or Omaha ribbonwork and appliqué, quilting, bobbin lace making, Omaha drum making, African-American hair braiding, Hmong needlework, musical instrument-making and many other kinds of hand work are examples of traditional arts. So are certain kinds of music and dance that are performed or done in communities. Ethnic arts -- arts practiced by people with a family or community heritage from another nation -- are important, regardless of whether the family has been in this country for many generations or has arrived recently. If the art form is traditional and occurs within a community, it may be eligible for funding.

Art forms that are not part of a community or family heritage cannot be funded under this program. The Mentoring Program does not support the work of professional teachers, contemporary studio crafts work, or those who make reproductions of antiques. Generally, the mentor (master artist) and apprentice should be from the same community or background. An example of a non-eligible project would be a German-American student who wishes to learn to make Mexican piñatas. Historic traditions that are being re-created, such as mountain-man crafts or modern interpretations of traditional folk or ethnic music or dance, also are not eligible for funding.

For More Information

If you are interested in learning more, call the NAC's Cultural Heritage Coordinator to obtain an application. You must be pre-approved to submit applications for a Mentoring Grant.